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THREE SERMONS:

I. On Mutual SUBJECTION.

II. On CONSCIENCE.

III. On the TRINITY.

By the Reverend Dr. SWIFT, *K*
Dean of St. PATRICK'S.



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LONDON;

Printed for R. DODSLEY in Pall-Mall;
And Sold by M. COOPER in Pater-noster-
Row. 1744.

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ON
Mutual SUBJECTION.

I St. PETER V. 5.

*-----Yea, all of you be subject one
to another.*



THE Apostle having in many Parts of this Epistle given Directions to Christians concerning the Duty of Subjection or Obedience to Superiors; in the several Instances of the Subject to his Prince, the Child to his Parent, the Servant to his Master, the Wife to her Husband, and the Younger to the
A Elder;

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Elder ; doth here, in the Words of the Text, sum up the whole, by advancing a Point of Doctrine, which at first may appear a little extraordinary ; *Yea all of you, saith he, be subject one to another.* For it should seem, that two Persons cannot properly be said to be subject to each other, and that Subjection is only due from Inferiors to those above them : Yet Saint Paul hath several Passages to the same Purpose.

Rom. xii. 10. For he exhorts the *Romans, in Honour, to prefer one another ;* and the *Philippians,*

Philip. ii. 3. *that in Lowliness of Mind they should let each esteem other better than themselves ;* and the *Ephesians,* that they should submit

Ephes. v. 21. *themselves one to another in the Fear of the Lord.* Here we find these two great Apostles recommending to all Christians this Duty of mutual Subjection. For we may observe by Saint Peter, that having mentioned the several Relations which Men bear to each other, as Governor and Subject, Master and Servant, and the rest which I have already repeated, he makes no Exception, but sums up the whole with commanding

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manding *All to be subject one to another.* From whence we may conclude, that this Subjection due from all Men to all Men, is something more than the Compliment of Course, when our Betters are pleased to tell us they are our humble Servants, but understand us to be their Slaves.

I know very well, that some of those who explain this Text, apply it to Humility, to the Duties of Charity, to private Exhortations, and to bearing with each other's Infirmities: And it is probable the Apostle may have had a Regard to all these. But however, many learned Men agree, that there is something more understood, and so the Words in their plain natural Meaning must import; as you will observe yourselves, if you read them with the beginning of the Verse, which is thus: *Likewise ye Younger submit yourselves unto the Elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another.* So that upon the whole there must be some kind of Subjection due from every Man to every Man, which cannot be made void by any Power, Præeminence,

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or Authority whatsoever. Now, what sort of Subjection this is, and how it ought to be paid, shall be the Subject of my present Discourse.

As God hath contrived all the Works of Nature to be useful, and in some manner a Support to each other, by which the whole Frame of the World under his Providence is preserved and kept up; so, among Mankind, our particular Stations are appointed to each of us by God Almighty, wherein we are obliged to act, as far as our Power reacheth, towards the Good of the whole Community. And he who doth not perform that Part assigned him, towards advancing the Benefit of the Whole, in proportion to his Opportunities and Abilities, is not only a useless, but a very mischievous Member of the Publick: Because he takes his Share of the Profit, and yet leaves his Share of the Burden to be born by others, which is the true principal Cause of most Miseries and Misfortunes in Life. For, a wise Man who does not assist with his Counsels, a great Man with his Protection, a rich

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a rich Man with his Bounty and Charity, and a poor Man with his Labour, are perfect Nufances in a Commonwealth. Neither is any Condition of Life more honourable in the Sight of God than another; otherwise he would be a Respector of Persons, which he assures us he is not: For he hath proposed the same Salvation to all Men, and hath only placed them in different Ways or Stations to work it out. Princes are born with no more Advantages of Strength or Wisdom than other Men; and by an unhappy Education, are usually more defective in both than thousands of their Subjects. They depend for every Necessary of Life upon the meanest of their People: Besides, Obedience and Subjection were never enjoined by God to humour the Passions, Lusts, and Vanities of those who demand them from us; but we are commanded to obey our Governors, because Disobedience would breed Seditions in the State. Thus Servants are directed to obey their Masters, Children their Parents, and Wives their Husbands; not from any Respect of Persons

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Rom. xii. 21,
22, 23, 26.

sons in God, but because otherwise there would be nothing but Confusion in private Families. This Matter will be clearly explained, by considering the Comparison which St. Paul makes between the Church of Christ and the natural Body of Man: for the same Resemblance will hold, not only to Families and Kingdoms, but to the whole Corporation of Mankind. *The Eye, saith he, cannot say unto the Hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the Hand to the Foot, I have no need of thee. Nay, much more, those Members of the Body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And whether one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it; or one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoyce with it.* The Case is directly the same among Mankind. The Prince cannot say to the Merchant, I have no need of thee; nor the Merchant to the Labourer, I have no need of thee. Nay, much more those Members, &c. For the Poor are generally more necessary Members of the Commonwealth than the Rich. Which clearly shews,
that

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that God never intended such Possessions for the Sake and Service of those to whom he lends them : But because he hath assigned every Man his particular Station to be useful in Life, and this for the Reason given by the Apostle, *that there may be no Schism in the Body.*

From hence may partly be gather'd the Nature of that Subjection which we all owe to one another. God Almighty hath been pleased to put us into an imperfect State, where we have perpetual Occasion of each other's Assistance. There is none so low, as not to be in a Capacity of assisting the Highest ; nor so high, as not to want the Assistance of the Lowest.

It plainly appears from what hath been said, that no one human Creature is more worthy than another in the sight of God, farther than according to the Goodness or Holiness of their Lives ; and, that Power, Wealth, and the like outward Advantages, are so far from being the Marks of God's approving or preferring those on whom they are bestowed, that, on the contrary, he is pleased

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pleased to suffer them to be almost engrossed by those who have least Title to his Favour. Now according to this Equality wherein God hath placed all Mankind with relation to himself, you will observe, that in all the Relations between Man and Man, there is a mutual Dependence, whereby the one cannot subsist without the other. Thus, no Man can be a Prince without Subjects; nor a Master without Servants, nor a Father without Children. And this both explains and confirms the Doctrine of the Text: for, where there is a mutual Dependence, there must be a mutual Duty, and consequently a mutual Subjection. For Instance, the Subject must obey his Prince, because God commands it, human Laws require it, and the Safety of the Publick makes it necessary. (For the same Reasons we must obey all that are in Authority, and submit ourselves not only to the Good and Gentle, but also to the Froward, whether they rule according to our Liking or no.) On the other Side, in those Countries that pretend to Freedom, Princes are subject to those Laws which

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which their People have chosen ; they are bound to protect their Subjects in Liberty, Property, and Religion, to receive their Petitions, and redress their Grievances : So that the best Prince is, in the Opinion of wise Men, only the greatest Servant of the Nation ; not only a Servant to the Publick in general, but in some sort to every Man in it. In the like manner, a Servant owes Obedience, and Diligence, and Faithfulness to his Master, from whom at the same time he hath a just Demand for Protection, and Maintenance, and gentle Treatment. Nay, even the poor Beggar hath a just Demand of an Alms from the Rich Man, who is guilty of Fraud, Injustice, and Oppression, if he does not afford Relief according to his Abilities.

But this Subjection we all owe one another is no where more necessary, than in the common Conversations of Life ; for without it there could be no Society among Men. If the Learned would not sometimes submit to the Ignorant, the Wise to the Simple, the Gentle to the Froward,

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the Old to the Weaknesses of the Young, there would be nothing but everlasting Variance in the World. This our Saviour himself confirmed by his own Example; for he appeared in the Form of a Servant, and washed his Disciples Feet, adding those memorable Words, *Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master wash your Feet, how much more ought ye to wash one another's Feet?* Under which Expression of washing the Feet, is included all that Subjection, Assistance, Love, and Duty, which every good Christian ought to pay his Brother, in whatever Station God hath placed him. For the greatest Prince and the meanest Slave, are not by infinite Degrees so distant, as our Saviour and those Disciples whose Feet he vouchsafed to wash.

And although this Doctrine of subjecting ourselves to one another may seem to grate upon the Pride and Vanity of Mankind, and may therefore be hard to be digested by those who value themselves upon their Greatness or their Wealth; yet is it really:

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no more than what most Men practise upon other Occasions. For if our Neighbour who is our Inferior comes to see us, we rise to receive him, we place him above us, and respect him as if he were better than ourselves; and this is thought both decent and necessary, and is usually called Good Manners. Now the Duty required by the Apostle, is, only that we should enlarge our Minds, and that what we thus practise in the common Course of Life, we should imitate in all our Actions and Proceedings whatsoever; since our Saviour tells us, that every Man is our Neighbour, and since we are so ready in the Point of Civility, to yield to others in our own Houses, where only we have any Title to govern.

Having thus shewn you what sort of Subjection it is which all Men owe one another, and in what Manner it ought to be paid, I shall now draw some Observations from what hath been said.

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And *First* ; A thorough Practice of this Duty of subjecting ourselves to the Wants and Infirmities of each other, would utterly extinguish in us the Vice of Pride. For, if God has pleased to entrust me with a Talent, not for my own Sake, but for the Service of others, and at the same time hath left me full of Wants and Necessities which others must supply ; I can then have no Cause to set any extraordinary Value upon my self, or to despise my Brother, because he hath not the same Talents which were lent to me. His Being may probably be as useful to the Publick as mine, and therefore, by the Rule of right Reason, I am in no sort preferable to him.

Secondly ; 'Tis very manifest from what hath been said, that no Man ought to look upon the Advantages of Life, such as Riches, Honour, Power, and the like, as his Property, but meerly as a Trust, which God hath deposited with him, to be employed for the Use of his Brethren ; and
God

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God will certainly punish the Breach of that Trust, though the Laws of Man will not, or rather indeed cannot ; because the Trust was conferred only by God, who has not left it to any Power on Earth to decide infallibly, whether a Man makes a good Use of his Talents or no, or to punish him where he fails. And therefore God seems to have more particularly taken this Matter into his own Hands, and will most certainly reward or punish us in proportion to our good or ill Performance in it. Now, although the Advantages which one Man possesseth more than another, may in some Sense be called his Property with respect to other Men, yet with respect to God they are, as I said, only a Trust. Which will plainly appear from hence. If a Man does not use those Advantages to the Good of the Publick, or the Benefit of his Neighbour, it is certain he doth not deserve them, and consequently that God never intended them for a Blessing to him ; and on the other Side, whoever does employ his Talents as he ought, will find by his own Experience, that

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that they were chiefly lent him for the Service of others: for to the Service of others he will certainly employ them.

Thirdly; If we could all be brought to practise this Duty of subjecting ourselves to each other, it would very much contribute to the general Happiness of Mankind: For this would root out Envy and Malice from the Heart of Man; because you cannot envy your Neighbour's Strength, if he makes use of it to defend your Life, or carry your Burden; you cannot envy his Wisdom, if he gives you good Counsel; nor his Riches, if he supplies you in your Wants; nor his Greatness, if he employs it to your Protection. The Miseries of Life are not properly owing to the unequal Distribution of Things; but God Almighty, the great King of Heaven, is treated like the Kings of the Earth, who although perhaps intending well themselves, have often most abominable Ministers and Stewards, and these generally the vilest, to whom they entrust the most Talents. But here is the Difference, that
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the Princes of this World see by other Men's Eyes, but God sees all Things; and therefore whenever he permits his Blessings to be dealt among those who are unworthy, we may certainly conclude, that he intends them as a Punishment to an evil World, as well as to the Owners. It were well if those would consider this, whose Riches serve them only as a Spur to Avarice, or as an Instrument to their Lusts; whose Wisdom is only of this World, to put false Colours upon Things, to call Good Evil, and Evil Good, against the Conviction of their own Consciences; and lastly, who employ their Power and Favour in Acts of Oppression or Injustice, in misrepresenting Persons and Things, or in countenancing the Wicked to the Ruin of the Innocent.

Fourthly; The Practice of this Duty of being subject to one another, would make us rest contented in the several Stations of Life wherein God hath thought fit to place us; because it would in the best and easiest manner bring us back as it were to that
early

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early State of the Gospel when Christians had all things in common. For if the Poor found the Rich disposed to supply their Wants ; if the Ignorant found the Wise ready to instruct and direct them ; or if the Weak might always find Protection from the Mighty ; they could none of them with the least Pretence of Justice lament their own Condition.

From all that hath been hitherto said, it appears, that great Abilities of any sort, when they are employed as God directs, do but make the Owners of them greater and more painful Servants to their Neighbour, and the Publick : However, we are by no means to conclude from hence, that they are not really Blessings, when they are in the Hands of Good Men. For first, what can be a greater Honour than to be chosen one of the Stewards and Dispensers of God's Bounty to Mankind ? What is there, that can give a generous Spirit more Pleasure and Complacency of Mind, than to consider, that he is an Instrument of doing much
Good ?

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Good? that great Numbers owe to him, under God, their Subsistence, their Safety, their Health, and the good Conduct of their Lives? The wickedest Man upon Earth takes a Pleasure in doing good to those he loves; and therefore surely a good Christian, who obeys our Saviour's Command of loving all Men, cannot but take Delight in doing good even to his Enemies. God, who gives all things to all Men, can receive nothing from any; and those among Men, who do the most Good, and receive the fewest Returns, do most resemble their Creator: For which reason Saint *Paul* delivers it as a Saying of our Saviour, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. By this Rule, what must become of those Things which the World values as the greatest Blessings, Riches, Power, and the like, when our Saviour plainly determines, that the best way to make them Blessings, is to part with them? Therefore, although the Advantages which one Man hath over another, may be called Blessings, yet they are by no means so in the Sense the World

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usually understands. Thus, for Example, great Riches are no Blessing in themselves; because the poor Man with the common Necessaries of Life enjoys more Health, and has fewer Cares without them: How then do they become Blessings? No otherwise, than by employing them in feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked, rewarding worthy Men, and in short, doing Acts of Charity and Generosity. Thus likewise, Power is no Blessing in itself, because private Men bear less Envy, and Trouble, and Anguish without it. But when it is employed to protect the Innocent, to relieve the Oppressed, and to punish the Oppressor, then it becomes a great Blessing. And so lastly even great Wisdom is in the Opinion of *Solomon* not a Blessing in itself: for *much Wisdom is much Sorrow*; and Men of common Understandings, if they serve God and mind their Callings, make fewer Mistakes in the Conduct of Life than those who have better Heads. And yet Wisdom is a mighty Blessing when it is applied to good Purposes, to instruct the Ignorant, to

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be a faithful Counsellor either in publick or private, to be a Director to Youth, and to many other Ends needless here to mention.

To conclude: God sent us into the World to obey his Commands, by doing as much Good as our Abilities will reach, and as little Evil as our many Infirmities will permit. Some he hath only trusted with one Talent, some with five, and some with ten. No Man is without his Talent; and he that is faithful or negligent in a little, shall be rewarded or punished, as well as he that hath been so in a great deal.

Consider what hath been said, &c.



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Consider what hath been said.





ON THE
Testimony of CONSCIENCE.

2 COR. I. 12. Part of it.

*For our Rejoycing is this, the
Testimony of our Conscience.*



HERE is no Word more frequently in the Mouths of Men, than that of *Conscience*, and the Meaning of it is in some measure generally understood: However, because it is likewise a Word extreamly abused by many People, who apply other Meanings to it, which God Almighty never intended; I shall explain it to you in the clearest manner I am able.

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The Word *Conscience* properly signifies that Knowledge which a Man hath within himself of his own Thoughts and Actions. And because if a Man judgeth fairly of his own Actions by comparing them with the Law of God, his Mind will either approve or condemn him according as he hath done Good or Evil; therefore this Knowledge or Conscience may properly be called both an Accuser and a Judge. So that whenever our Conscience accuseth us, we are certainly guilty; but we are not always innocent when it doth not accuse us: For very often, through the Hardness of our Hearts, or the Fondness and Favour we bear to our selves, or through Ignorance, or Neglect, we do not suffer our Conscience to take any Cognisance of several Sins we commit. There is another Office likewise belonging to Conscience, which is that of being our Director and Guide; and the wrong Use of this hath been the Occasion of more Evils under the Sun, than almost all other Causes put together. For, as Conscience is nothing else but the Knowledge we have of what we

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we are thinking and doing; so it can guide us no farther than that Knowledge reacheth. And therefore God hath placed Conscience in us to be our Director only in those Actions which Scripture and Reason plainly tell us to be good or evil. But in Cases too difficult or doubtful for us to comprehend or determine, there Conscience is not concerned; because it cannot advise in what it doth not understand, nor decide where it is itself in doubt: But by God's great Mercy, those difficult Points are never of absolute Necessity to our Salvation. There is likewise another Evil, that Men often say, a Thing is against their Conscience, when really it is not. For Instance: As any of those who differ from the Worship established, why they do not come to Church, they will say, they dislike the Ceremonies, the Prayers, the Habits, and the like, and therefore it goes against their Conscience: But they are mistaken, their Teacher hath put those Words into their Mouth; for a Man's Conscience can go no higher than his Knowledge; and therefore till he has thoroughly

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roughly examined by Scripture, and the Practice of the ancient Church; whether those Points are blameable or no, his Conscience cannot possibly direct him to condemn them. Hence have likewise arisen those Mistakes about what is usually called *Liberty of Conscience*; which, properly speaking, is no more than a Liberty of knowing our own Thoughts; which Liberty no one can take from us. But those Words have obtained quite different Meanings: Liberty of Conscience is now-a-days not only understood to be the Liberty of believing what Men please, but also of endeavouring to propagate that Belief as much as they can, and to overthrow the Faith which the Laws have already established; to be rewarded by the Publick for those wicked Endeavours: And this is the Liberty of Conscience which the Fanaticks are now openly in the Face of the World endeavouring at with their utmost Application. At the same time it cannot but be observed, that those very Persons, who under Pretence of a publick Spirit and Tender-

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derness towards their Christian Brethren, are so jealous for such a Liberty of Conscience as this, are of all others the least tender to those who differ from them in the smallest Point relating to Government; and I wish I could not say, that the Majesty of the living God may be offended with more Security than the Memory of a dead Prince. But the Wisdom of the World at present seems to agree with that of the Heathen Emperor, who said, If the Gods were offended, it was their own Concern, and they were able to vindicate themselves.

But although Conscience hath been abused to those wicked Purposes which I have already related, yet a due Regard to the Directions it plainly gives us, as well as to its Accusations, Reproaches, and Advices, would be of the greatest Use to Mankind, both for their present Welfare and future Happiness.

Therefore my Discourse at this time shall be directed to prove to you, that there is no solid, firm Foundation for Virtue, but

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On the Testimony of Conscience.

on a Conscience which is guided by Religion.

In order to this, I shall first shew you the Weakness and Uncertainty of two false Principles which many People set up in the Place of Conscience, for a Guide to their Actions.

The first of these false Principles is, what the World usually calls *Moral Honesty*. There are some People, who appear very indifferent as to Religion, and yet have the Repute of being just and fair in their Dealings; and these are generally known by the Character of good Moral Men. But now if you look into the Grounds and Motives of such a Man's Actions, you shall find them to be no other than his own Ease and Interest. For Example: You trust a moral Man with your Money in the Way of Trade, you trust another with the Defence of your Cause at Law, and perhaps they both deal justly with you. Why? Not from any Regard they have for Justice, but because their Fortune depends upon their Credit, and a Stain of open publick Dishonesty

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honesty must be to their Disadvantage. But let it consist with such a Man's Interest and Safety to wrong you, and then it will be impossible you can have any Hold upon him ; because there is nothing left to give him a Check, or to put in the Balance against his Profit. For if he hath nothing to govern himself by but the Opinion of the World, as long as he can conceal his Injustice from the World, he thinks he is safe.

Besides, it is found by Experience, that those Men who set up for Morality without regard to Religion, are generally but virtuous in part ; they will be just in their Dealings between Man and Man, but if they find themselves disposed to Pride, Lust, Intemperance, or Avarice, they do not think their Morality concerned to check them in any of these Vices, because it is the great Rule of such Men, that they may lawfully follow the Dictates of Nature, wherever their Safety, Health, and Fortune are not injured. So that upon the whole, there is hardly one Vice which a meer moral

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Man may not upon some Occasions allow himself to practise.

The other false Principle, which some Men set up in the Place of Conscience to be their Director in Life, is what those who pretend to it, call *Honour*.

This Word is often made the Sanction of an Oath; it is reckoned a great Commendation to be a Man of strict Honour; and it is commonly understood, that a Man of Honour can never be guilty of a base Action. This is usually the Stile of Military Men, of Persons with Titles, and of others who pretend to Birth and Quality. 'Tis true indeed, that in ancient Times it was universally understood, that Honour was the Reward of Virtue; but if such Honour as is now-a-days going will not permit a Man to do a base Action, it must be allowed, there are very few such Things as base Actions in Nature. No Man of Honour, as that Word is usually understood, did ever pretend that his Honour obliged him to be chaste or temperate, to pay his Creditors, to be useful to his Country, to do good to Mankind,

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Mankind, to endeavour to be wise or learned, to regard his Word, his Promise, or his Oath; or if he hath any of these Virtues, they were never learned in the Catechism of Honour, which contains but two Precepts, the punctual Payment of Debts contracted at Play, and the right understanding the several Degrees of an Affront, in order to revenge it by the Death of an Adversary.

But suppose this Principle of Honour, which some Men so much boast of, did really produce more Virtues than it ever pretended to; yet since the very Being of that Honour dependeth upon the Breath, the Opinion, or the Fancy of the People, the Virtues derived from it could be of no long or certain Duration. For Example: Suppose a Man from a Principle of Honour should resolve to be just, or chaste, or temperate, and yet the censuring World should take a Humour of refusing him those Characters, he would then think the Obligation at an End. Or on the other Side, if he thought he could gain Honour by the falsest and

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and vilest Action (which is a Case that very often happens,) he would then make no Scruple to perform it. And God knows, it would be an unhappy State, to have the Religion, the Liberty, or the Property of a People lodged in such Hands, which however hath been too often the Case.

What I have said upon this Principle of Honour may perhaps be thought of small Concernment to most of you who are my Hearers : However, a Caution was not altogether unnecessary ; since there is nothing by which not only the Vulgar, but the honest Tradesman hath been so much deceived, as this infamous Pretence to Honour in too many of their Betters.

Having thus shewn you the Weakness and Uncertainty of those Principles which some Men set up in the Place of Conscience to direct them in their Actions, I shall now endeavour to prove to you that there is no solid, firm Foundation of Virtue, but in a Conscience directed by the Principles of Religion.

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There is no way of judging how far we may depend upon the Actions of Men, otherwise than by knowing the Motives, and Grounds, and Causes of them; and if the Motives of our Actions be not resolved and determin'd into the Law of God, they will be precarious and uncertain, and liable to perpetual Changes. I will shew you what I mean, by an Example: Suppose a Man thinks it his Duty to obey his Parents, because Reason tells him so, because he is obliged by Gratitude, and because the Laws of his Country command him to do so: But if he stops here, his Parents can have no lasting Security; for an Occasion may happen, wherein it may be extremely his Interest to be disobedient, and where the Laws of the Land can lay no Hold upon him: Therefore before such a Man can safely be trusted, he must proceed farther, and consider, that his Reason is the Gift of God; that God commanded him to be obedient to the Laws, and did moreover in a particular manner enjoin him to be dutiful to his Parents;
after

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after which, if he lays a due Weight upon those Considerations, he will probably continue in his Duty to the End of his Life : Because no earthly Interest can ever come in Competition to balance the Danger of offending his Creator, or the Happiness of pleasing him. And of all this his Conscience will certainly inform him, if he hath any Regard to Religion.

Secondly; Fear and Hope are the two greatest natural Motives of all Men's Actions : But neither of these Passions will ever put us in the way of Virtue, unless they be directed by Conscience. For altho' virtuous Men do sometimes accidentally make their way to Preferment, yet the World is so corrupted, that no Man can reasonably hope to be rewarded in it, merely upon account of his Virtue. And consequently the Fear of Punishment in this Life will preserve Men from very few Vices, since some of the blackest and basest do often prove the surest Steps to Favour ; such as Ingratitude, Hypocrisy, Treachery, Malice, Subornation, Atheism, and many more
which

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which human Laws do little concern themselves about. But when Conscience placeth before us the Hopes of everlasting Happiness, and the Fears of everlasting Misery, as the Reward and Punishment of our good or evil Actions, our Reason can find no way to avoid the Force of such an Argument, otherwise than by running into Infidelity.

Lastly; Conscience will direct us to love God, and to put our whole Trust and Confidence in Him. Our Love of God will inspire us with a Detestation for Sin, as what is of all Things most contrary to his Divine Nature; and if we have an entire Confidence in him, *that* will enable us to subdue and despise all the Allurements of the World.

It may here be objected, If Conscience be so sure a Director to us Christians in the Conduct of our Lives, how comes it to pass that the ancient Heathens, who had no other Lights but those of Nature and Reason, should so far exceed us in all manner of Virtue, as plainly appears by many Examples they have left on record?

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To

On the Testimony of Conscience.

To which it may be answered ; First, those Heathens were extremely strict and exact in the Education of their Children ; whereas among us this Care is so much laid aside, that the more God has blessed any Man with Estate or Quality, just so much less in Proportion is the Care he takes in the Education of his Children, and particularly of that Child which is to inherit his Fortune ; of which the Effects are visible enough among the Great Ones of the World. Again, those Heathens did in a particular manner instill the Principle into their Children of loving their Country, which is so far otherwise now-a-days, that, of the several Parties among us there is none of them that seem to have so much as heard whether there be such a Virtue in the World, as plainly appears by their Practices, and especially when they are placed in those Stations where they can only have Opportunity of shewing it. Lastly ; The most considerable among the Heathens did generally believe Rewards and Punishments in a Life to come ; which is the great Principle
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for Conscience to work upon : Whereas too many of those who would be thought the most considerable among us, do, both by their Practices and their Discourses, plainly affirm, that they believe nothing at all of the Matter.

Wherefore since it hath manifestly appeared that a Religious Conscience is the only true solid Foundation upon which Virtue can be built, give me leave before I conclude, to let you see how necessary such a Conscience is, to conduct us in every Station and Condition of our Lives.

That a Religious Conscience is necessary in any Station, is confessed even by those who tell us that all Religion was invented by cunning Men in order to keep the World in Awe. For if Religion, by the Confession of its Adversaries, be necessary towards the well-governing of Mankind ; then every Wise Man in Power will be sure not only to chuse out for every Station under him such Persons as are most likely to be kept in Awe by Religion, but likewise to carry

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some Appearance of it himself, or else he is a very weak Politician. And accordingly in any Country where great Persons affect to be open Despisers of Religion, their Counsels will be found at last to be fully as destructive to the State as the Church.

It was the Advice of *Jethro* to his Son-in-Law *Moses*, to *provide able Men, such as fear God, Men of Truth, hating Covetousness*, and to place such over the People; and *Moses*, who was as wise a Statesman at least as any in this Age, thought fit to follow that Advice. Great Abilities, without the Fear of God, are most dangerous Instruments when they are trusted with Power. The Laws of Man have thought fit, that those who are called to any Office of Trust should be bound by an Oath to the faithful Discharge of it: But an Oath is an Appeal to God, and therefore can have no Influence except upon those who believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of those that seek him, and a Punisher of those who disobey him: And therefore, we see, the Laws themselves are forced to have recourse
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to Conscience in these Cases, because their Penalties cannot reach the Arts of cunning Men, who can find Ways to be guilty of a thousand Injustices without being discovered, or at least without being punished. And the Reason why we find so many Frauds, Abuses, and Corruptions where any Trust is conferred, can be no other, than that there is so little Conscience and Religion left in the World, or at least that Men in their Choice of Instruments have private Ends in view, which are very different from the Service of the Publick. Besides, it is certain, that Men who profess to have no Religion, are full as zealous to bring over Profelytes as any Papist or Fanatick can be. And therefore, if those who are in Station high enough to be of Influence or Example to others; if those (I say) openly profess a Contempt or Disbelief of Religion, they will be sure to make all their Dependents of their own Principles; and what Security can the Publick expect from such Persons, whenever their Interests or their Lusts come into Competition with their Duty? It is

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very possible for a Man who hath the Appearance of Religion, and a great Pretender to Conscience, to be wicked and an Hypocrite ; but it is impossible for a Man who openly declares against Religion, to give any reasonable Security that he will not be false and cruel, and corrupt, whenever a Temptation offers, which he values more than he does the Power wherewith he was trusted. And if such a Man doth not betray his Cause and his Master, it was only because the Temptation was not properly offered, or the Profit was too small, or the Danger too great. And hence it is that we find so little Truth or Justice among us, because there are so very few who either in the Service of the Publick, or in common Dealings with each other, do ever look farther than their own Advantage, and how to guard themselves against the Laws of the Country ; which a Man may do by Favour, by Secresy, or by Cunning, though he breaks almost every Law of God.

Therefore to conclude : It plainly appears, that unless Men are guided by the Advice
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and Judgment of a Conscience founded on Religion, they can give no Security that they will be either good Subjects, faithful Servants of the Publick, or honest in their mutual Dealings; since there is no other Tie thro' which the Pride, or Lust, or Avarice, or Ambition of Mankind will not certainly break one Time or other.

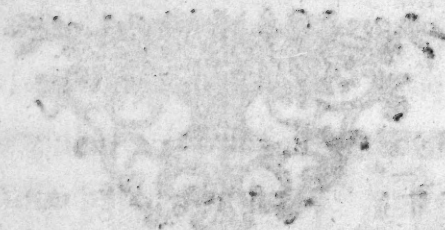
Consider what has been said, &c.



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and Judgment of a Conscience founded on
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ON THE
TRINITY.

i Epist. Gen. of St. JOHN V. 7.

*For there are Three that bear Record
in Heaven, the Father, the Word,
and the Holy Ghost; and these
Three are One.*



HIS Day being set apart to
acknowledge our Belief in
the Eternal TRINITY, I
thought it might be proper
to employ my present Dis-
course entirely upon that Subject; and I
hope to handle it in such a Manner, that
the most Ignorant among you may return

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home better informed of your Duty in this great Point, than probably you are at present.

It must be confessed, that by the Weakness and Indiscretion of busy (or at best, of well-meaning) People, as well as by the Malice of those who are Enemies to all Revealed Religion, and are not content to possess their own Infidelity in Silence, without communicating it to the Disturbance of Mankind; I say, by these Means, it must be confessed, that the Doctrine of the Trinity hath suffered very much, and made Christianity suffer along with it. For these two Things must be granted: First, That Men of wicked Lives would be very glad there were no Truth in Christianity at all; and secondly, If they can pick out any one single Article in the Christian Religion which appears not agreeable to their own corrupted Reason, or to the Arguments of those bad People, who follow the Trade of seducing others, they presently conclude that the Truth of the whole Gospel must sink along with that one Article; which is just
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as wise, as if a Man should say, because he dislikes one Law of his Country, he will therefore observe no Law at all; and yet, that one Law may be very reasonable in itself, altho' he does not allow it, or does not know the Reason of the Lawgivers.

Thus it hath happened with the great Doctrine of the Trinity; which Word is indeed not in Scripture, but was a Term of Art invented in the earlier Times to express the Doctrine by a single Word, for the sake of Brevity and Convenience. The Doctrine then, as delivered in Holy Scripture, tho' not exactly in the same Words, is very short, and amounts only to this, That the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each of them God, and yet that there is but One God. For, as to the Word *Person*, when we say there are three Persons; and as to those other Explanations in the *Athanasian Creed* this Day read to you (whether compiled by *Athanasius* or no) they were taken up three hundred Years after Christ, to expound this Doctrine; and I will tell you upon what Occasion. About that time there

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sprang up a Heresy of a People called *Arrians*, from one *Arrius* the Leader of them. These denied our Saviour to be God, although they allowed all the rest of the Gospel (wherein they were more sincere than their Followers among us,) Thus the Christian World was divided into two Parts, till at length, by the Zeal and Courage of Saint *Athanasius*, the *Arrians* were condemned in a General Council, and a Creed formed upon the true Faith, as Saint *Athanasius* hath settled it. This Creed is now read at certain times in our Churches, which although it is useful for Edification to those who understand it, yet since it contains some nice and philosophical Points which few People can comprehend, the Bulk of Mankind is obliged to believe no more than the Scripture-Doctrine, as I have deliver'd it. Because that Creed was intended only as an Answer to the *Arrians* in their own Way, who were very subtle Disputers.

But this Heresy having revived in the World about an hundred Years ago, and continued ever since; not out of a Zeal to
Truth,

Truth, but to give a Loose to Wickedness, by throwing off all Religion; several Divines, in order to answer the Cavils of those Adversaries to Truth and Morality, began to find out farther Explanations of this Doctrine of the Trinity, by Rules of Philosophy; which have multiplied Controversies to such a Degree, as to beget Scruples that have perplexed the Minds of many sober Christians, who otherwise could never have entertained them.

I must therefore be so bold to affirm, that the Method taken by many of those learned Men to defend the Doctrine of the Trinity, hath been founded upon a Mistake.

It must be allowed, that every Man is bound to follow the Rules and Directions of that Measure of Reason which God hath given him; and indeed he cannot do otherwise if he will be sincere, or act like a Man. For Instance: If I should be commanded by an Angel from Heaven to believe it is Midnight at Noon-day; yet I could not believe him. So if I were directly told in Scripture, that *Three are One*, and
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One is Three, I could not conceive or believe it in the natural common Sense of that Expression, but must suppose that something dark or mystical was meant, which it pleased God to conceal from me and from all the World. Thus in the Text, *There are Three that bear Record, &c.* Am I capable of knowing and defining what Union and what Distinction there may be in the Divine Nature? which possibly may be hid from the Angels themselves. Again, I see it plainly declared in Scripture that there is but one God; and yet I find our Saviour claiming the Prerogative of God in knowing Men's Thoughts; in saying *He and his Father are one*; and, *before Abraham was, I am.* I read, that the Disciples worshipped him: That *Thomas* said to him, *My Lord and my God.* And *Saint John*, Chap. 1st, *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* I read likewise that the Holy Ghost bestowed the Gift of Tongues, and the Power of working Miracles, which, if rightly considered, is as great a Miracle as any, that

that a Number of illiterate Men should of a sudden be qualified to speak all the Languages then known in the World, such as could be done by the Inspiration of God alone. From these several Texts it is plain that God commands us to believe there is an Union and there is a Distinction ; but what that Union, or what that Distinction is, all Mankind are equally ignorant, and must continue so, at least till the Day of Judgment, without some new Revelation.

But because I cannot conceive the Nature of this Union and Distinction in the Divine Nature, am I therefore to reject them as absurd and impossible, as I would if any one told me that three Men are one, and one Man is three? We are told, that a Man and his Wife are one Flesh ; this I can comprehend the Meaning of ; yet, literally taken, it is a thing impossible. But the Apostle tells us, *We see but in part, and we know but in part* ; and yet we would comprehend all the secret Ways and Workings of God,

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Therefore I shall again repeat the Doctrine of the Trinity, as it is positively affirmed in Scripture : That God is there expressed in three different Names, as Father, as Son, and as Holy Ghost ; that each of these is God, and that there is but one God. But this Union and Distinction are a Mystery utterly unknown to Mankind.

This is enough for any good Christian to believe on this great Article, without ever inquiring any farther. And this can be contrary to no Man's Reason, although the Knowledge of it is hid from him.

But there is another Difficulty of great Importance among those who quarrel with the Doctrine of the Trinity, as well as with several other Articles of Christianity ; which is, that our Religion abounds in Mysteries, and these they are so bold to revile as Cant, Imposture, and Priest-craft. It is impossible for us to determine for what Reasons God thought fit to communicate some Things to us in part, and leave some part a Mystery. But so it is in Fact, and so the Holy Scriptures tell us in several Places.

For Instance: The Resurrection and Change of our Bodies are called Mysteries by Saint *Paul*; our Saviour's Incarnation, is another: The Kingdom of God is called a Mystery by our Saviour, to be only known to his Disciples; so is Faith and the Word of God by Saint *Paul*: I omit many others. So that to declare against all Mysteries without Distinction or Exception, is to declare against the whole Tenor of the New Testament.

There are two Conditions that may bring a Mystery under Suspicion. First, When it is not taught and commanded in Holy Writ; or, secondly, When the Mystery turns to the Advantage of those who preach it to others. Now, as to the first, it can never be said, that we preach Mysteries without Warrant from Holy Scripture, although I confess this of the Trinity may have sometimes been explained by human Invention, which might perhaps better have been spared. As to the second; it will not be possible to charge the Protestant Priesthood with proposing any temporal Advantage

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tage to themselves by broaching or multiplying, or preaching of Mysteries. Does this Mystery of the Trinity, for Instance, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, bring the least Profit or Power to the Preachers? No; it is as great a Mystery to themselves as it is to the meanest of their Hearers; and may be rather a Cause of Humiliation, by putting their Understanding in that Point upon a Level with the most ignorant of their Flock. It is true indeed, the *Roman Church* hath very much enriched herself by trading in Mysteries, for which they have not the least Authority from Scripture, and were fitted only to advance their own temporal Wealth and Grandeur; such as *Transubstantiation, Worshipping of Images, Indulgences for Sins, Purgatory, and Masses for the Dead*; with many more: But it is the perpetual Talent of those who have Ill-Will to our Church, or a Contempt for all Religion, taken up by the Wickedness of their Lives, to charge us with the Errors and Corruptions of Popery, which all Protestants have thrown off near two hundred Years:

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Years : Whereas those Mysteries held by us have no Prospect of Power, Pomp, or Wealth, but have been ever maintained by the universal Body of true Believers from the Days of the Apostles, and will be so to the Resurrection ; neither will the Gates of Hell prevail against them.

It may be thought perhaps a strange thing, that God should require us to believe Mysteries, while the Reason or Manner of what we are to believe is above our Comprehension, and wholly concealed from us : neither doth it appear at first sight, that the believing or not believing them doth concern either the Glory of God, or contribute to the Goodness or Wickedness of our Lives. But this is a great and dangerous Mistake. We see what a mighty Weight is laid upon Faith, both in the Old and New Testament. In the former we read how the Faith of *Abraham* is praised, who could believe that God would raise from him a great Nation, at the very same time that he was commanded to sacrifice his only Son, and despaired of any other Issue. And

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this was to him a great Myſtery. Our Saviour is perpetually preaching Faith to his Diſciples, or reproaching them with the Want of it; and Saint *Paul* produceth numerous Examples of the Wonders done by Faith. And all this is highly reaſonable; for, Faith is an entire Dependence upon the Truth, the Power, the Juſtice, and the Mercy of God; which Dependence will certainly incline us to obey him in all things. So that the great Excellency of Faith conſiſts in the Conſequence it hath upon our Actions: As, if we depend upon the Truth and Wiſdom of a Man, we ſhall certainly be more diſpoſed to follow his Advice. Therefore, let no Man think that he can lead as good a moral Life without Faith, as with it; for this Reaſon, Becauſe he who has no Faith, cannot, by the Strength of his own Reaſon or Endeavours, ſo eaſily reſiſt Temptations, as the other who depends upon God's Aſſiſtance in the overcoming his Frailties, and is ſure to be rewarded for ever in Heaven for his Victory over them. *Faith, ſays the Apoſtle, is the Evidence of Things*

Things not seen : He means, that Faith is a Virtue by which any thing commanded us by God to believe, appears evident and certain to us, although we do not see, nor can conceive it ; because, by Faith we entirely depend upon the Truth and Power of God.

It is an old and true Distinction, that Things may be above our Reason without being contrary to it. Of this Kind are the Power, the Nature, and the universal Presence of God, with innumerable other Points. How little do those who quarrel with Mysteries, know of the commonest Actions of Nature? The Growth of an Animal, of a Plant, or of the smallest Seed, is a Mystery to the wisest among Men. If an ignorant Person were told that a Load-stone would draw Iron at a Distance, he might say it was a Thing contrary to his Reason, and could not believe before he saw it with his Eyes.

The Manner whereby the Soul and Body are united, and how they are distinguished, is wholly unaccountable to us. We see
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but one Part, and yet we know we consist of two ; and this is a Mystery we cannot comprehend, any more than that of the Trinity.

From what hath been said, it is manifest, that God did never command us to believe, nor his Ministers to preach, any Doctrine which is contrary to the Reason he hath pleased to endow us with ; but for his own wise Ends has thought fit to conceal from us the Nature of the Thing he commands ; thereby to try our Faith and Obedience, and encrease our Dependence upon him.

It is highly probable, that if God should please to reveal unto us this great Mystery of the Trinity, or some other Mysteries in our Holy Religion, we should not be able to understand them, unless he would at the same time think fit to bestow on us some new Powers or Faculties of the Mind, which we want at present, and are reserved till the Day of Resurrection to Life eternal. *For now, as the Apostle says, we see through a Glass darkly, but then Face to Face.*

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Thus, we see, the Matter is brought to this Issue ; we must either believe what God directly commands us in Holy Scripture, or we must wholly reject the Scripture, and the Christian Religion which we pretend to profess: But this, I hope, is too desperate a Step for any of us to make.

I have already observed, that those who preach up the Belief of the Trinity, or of any other Mystery, cannot propose any Temporal Advantage to themselves by so doing. But this is not the Case of those who oppose these Doctrines. Do *they* lead better moral Lives than a good Christian ? Are *they* more just in their Dealings ? more chaste, or temperate, or charitable ? Nothing at all of this ; but on the contrary, their Intent is to overthrow all Religion, that they may gratify their Vices without any Reproach from the World, or their own Conscience ; and are zealous to bring over as many others as they can to their own Opinions ; because it is some kind of imaginary Comfort to have a Multitude on their Side.

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There is no Miracle mention'd in Holy Writ, which, if it were strictly examined, is not as much contrary to common Reason, and as much a Mystery as this Doctrine of the Trinity; and therefore we may with equal Justice deny the Truth of them all. For Instance: It is against the Laws of Nature, that a Human Body should be able to walk upon the Water, as Saint *Peter* is recorded to have done; or that a dead Carcase should be raised from the Grave after three Days, when it began to corrupt; which those who understand Anatomy will pronounce to be impossible by the common Rules of Nature and Reason. Yet these Miracles, and many others, are positively affirmed in the Gospel; and these we must believe; or give up our Holy Religion to Atheists and Infidels.

I shall now make a few Inferences and Observations from what hath been said.

First, It would be well if People would not lay so much Weight on their own Reason

son in Matters of Religion, as to think every thing impossible and absurd which they cannot conceive. How often do we contradict the right Rules of Reason in the whole Course of our Lives? Reason itself is true and just, but the Reason of every particular Man is weak and wavering, perpetually sway'd and turn'd by his Interests, his Passions, and his Vices. Let any Man but consider, when he hath a Controversy with another, though his Cause be ever so unjust, though the whole World be against him, how blinded he is by the Love of himself, to believe that Right is Wrong, and Wrong is Right, when it makes for his own Advantage. Where is then the right Use of his Reason which he so much boasts of, and which he would blasphemously set up to controul the Commands of the Almighty?

Secondly. When Men are tempted to deny the Mysteries of Religion, let them examine and search into their own Hearts, whether they have not some favourite Sin which is of their Party in this Dispute, and

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which is equally contrary to other Commands of God in the Gospel. For, why do Men love Darkness rather than Light? The Scripture tells us, *Because their Deeds are evil*; and there can be no other Reason assigned. Therefore when Men are curious and inquisitive to discover some weak Sides in Christianity, and inclined to favour every thing that is offered to its Disadvantage, it is plain they wish it were not true, and those Wishes can proceed from nothing but an evil Conscience; because, if there be Truth in our Religion, their Condition must be miserable.

And therefore, *Thirdly*, Men should consider, that raising Difficulties concerning the Mysteries in Religion, cannot make them more wise, learned, or virtuous; better Neighbours, or Friends, or more serviceable to their Country; but, whatever they pretend, will destroy their inward Peace of Mind, by perpetual Doubts and Fears arising in their Breasts. And, God forbid we should ever see the Times so bad, when
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dangerous Opinions in Religion will be a Means to get Favour and Preferment; altho' even in such a Case it would be an ill Traffick, to gain the World, and lose our own Souls. So that upon the whole it will be impossible to find any real Use towards a virtuous or happy Life, by denying the Mysteries of the Gospel.

Fourthly. Those strong Unbelievers, who expect that all Mysteries should be squared and fitted to their own Reason, might have somewhat to say for themselves, if they could satisfy the general Reason of Mankind in their other Opinions; but herein they are miserably defective, absurd, and ridiculous; they strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel; they can believe that the World was made by Chance; that God doth not concern himself with Things below, will neither punish Vice, nor reward Virtue; that Religion was invented by cunning Men to keep the World in Awe; with many other Opinions equally false and detestable, against the common Light of Nature as well as

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Reason; against the universal Sentiments of all civilized Nations, and offensive to the Ears even of a sober Heathen.

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III *Lastly.* Since the World abounds with pestilent Books particularly written against this Doctrine of the Trinity; it is fit to inform you, that the Authors of them proceed wholly upon a Mistake: They would shew how impossible it is that *Three* can be One, and *One* can be Three; whereas the Scripture saith no such Thing, at least in that Manner they would make it: But only that there is some kind of Unity and Distinction in the Divine Nature, which Mankind cannot possibly comprehend: Thus the whole Doctrine is short and plain, and in itself incapable of any Controversy; since God himself hath pronounced the Fact, but wholly concealed the Manner. And therefore many Divines who thought fit to answer those wicked Books, have been mistaken too, by answering Fools in their Folly; and endeavouring to explain a Mystery which God intended to keep secret from us.

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And as I would exhort all Men to avoid reading those wicked Books written against this Doctrine, as dangerous and pernicious; so I think they may omit the Answers, as unnecessary. This I confess will probably affect but few or none among the Generality of our Congregations, who do not much trouble themselves with Books, at least of this kind. However, many who do not read themselves, are seduced by others that do; and thus become Unbelievers upon Trust and at second Hand; and this is too frequent a Case. For which Reason I have endeavoured to put this Doctrine upon a short and sure Foot, levelled to the meanest Understanding; by which we may, as the Apostle directs, be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us, with Meekness and Fear.

And thus I have done with my Subject, which probably I should not have chosen, if I had not been invited to it by the Occasion of this Season, appointed on purpose to celebrate the Mysteries of the Trinity, and the

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Descent of the Holy Ghost, wherein we pray to be kept stedfast in this Faith ; and what this Faith is I have shewn you in the plainest Manner I could. For upon the whole, it is no more than this : God commands us, by our Dependence upon his Truth and his holy Word, to believe a Fact that we do not understand. And this is no more than what we do every Day in the Works of Nature, upon the Credit of Men of Learning. Without Faith we can do no Works acceptable to God ; for if they proceed from any other Principle, they will not advance our Salvation ; and this Faith, as I have explained it, we may acquire without giving up our Senses, or contradicting our Reason. May God of his infinite Mercy inspire us with true Faith in every Article and Mystery of our Holy Religion, so as to dispose us to do what is pleasing in his sight ; and this we pray through Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the mysterious incomprehensible One God, be all Honour and Glory now and for evermore. *Amen.*

The E N D.